

Promising Practices

Standards-Based Planning and Teaching in a Multicultural Classroom

By Chinaka S. DomNwachukwu

There seems to be a tension between the standards movement and the multicultural education movement in today's academic discourse. The fact, however, is that it is possible for teachers to develop standards-based lessons across various disciplines and effectively weave multicultural education into them. This approach is less time consuming than other multicultural education approaches and presents the possibility of standards-based instructional delivery at the highest level of cultural integration. In order to address this new approach, we must first understand traditional standards-based instruction and multicultural education.

Standards-Based Instruction

One of the fundamental points of confusion in understanding standards-based instruction is the assumption that it suggests a "one-size-fits-all" approach to teaching. Series of researches have looked at standards-based teaching. Some of these researches were cited by Wang and Odell (2002), who provided a variety of ways for looking at standards-based teaching. They cited Romberg (1992), Cobb (1994), and Cohen (1984) as presenting standards-based instruction as student-centered instruction that focuses on progressive ideas and constructivist ideas of learning and constructing knowledge; as active sense-making by students; and as collaborative inquiry.

According to this approach, knowledge is seen as "consisting of cultural artifacts constructed by individuals and groups" (Wang & Odell, p.484). If these ideas of standards-based instruction are to be taken at face value, one can logically argue that there could be a positive relationship that exists between standards-based instruction and multicultural education, contrary to the general perception.

According to Beverly Falk (2002), standards-based instruction and assessments can sometimes stimulate teachers and their students to "get clear about their purposes, to develop coherent goals for learning, and to make use of a range of instructional strategies to support students' varying approaches to learning" (p.613). A more appropriate argument is that high standards, when required for all, may make it possible to invest resources into providing assistance to those who need extra help (Edsource, 2003).

The argument must be presented, however, that despite the possible symbiotic relationship that may be found between the standards-based instructional reform and the multicultural education movement, multicultural education seems to have suffered grave casualties in states where the standards-based reform movement has been the strongest. One of the fundamental issues that has often crippled the implementation of multicultural education in today's classrooms is time for another "subject." Many teachers and school administrators look at the idea of multicultural education as the inroad of a new subject into the school curriculum. This perception of multicultural education is based on the forms multicultural education has traditionally taken in schools.

Multicultural Education

James Banks (2003) has presented four levels of multicultural education, namely: contributions, additive, transformational, and social action approaches. According to him, the first level deals with heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements. Teachers conveniently infuse cultural themes like holidays and heroes into their curriculum. Banks refers to this approach as the easiest approach for teachers to integrate multicultural content into their curriculum, but one may argue against that assumption, because amidst the contemporary standards-based instructions, "scripted teaching," "pacing," and "bench-marking," it is more and more difficult to integrate cultural contributions and holidays into the main curriculum, unless it comes within the scripted teaching package.

At the second level, the additive approach, teachers add content, concepts, themes, and perspectives that are multicultural without changing the structure of their instructional materials. Teachers work hard to infuse multicultural themes, content, and perspectives into the main curriculum. When teachers do this, it often involves worksheets and reading materials on specific cultural activities related to the main topic being taught.

The problem with this approach is that whereas it may work perfectly well in history and social studies or language classes, it may be hard to do in mathematics, science, and other technical classes. In mathematics and science classrooms you may see multicultural games used to teach mathematics or science concepts, eg., Mankala (Okwe), an African game used in

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teaching addition, subtraction, and multiplication. When such games are used, their multicultural emphases are often lost, as generally nothing is done or said to connect the activity to the culture from which it originated.

The contemporary standards-based curriculum is crammed with lots of reading, writing, and arithmetic, as schools are struggling to meet the various state academic standards as well as score high on high-stakes tests. It is traditionally known that local schools hold the power on how they constitute and deliver instruction (Chatterji, 2002). With the standards movement and its accompanying evils of pacing and scripted teaching, that right and power has been significantly taken away from schools, and thus asking them to spend extra time teaching heroes and holidays or multicultural games is to require the impossible from them.

Added to the lack of time and space in the curriculum is the fact that the first two approaches have little or no value in transforming students' worldview or enhancing cultural appreciation, respect, and tolerance. These first two approaches are superficial, yet they place lots of demand on teaching time and curricular space.

In this age of standards-based instruction and assessments, any attempt to implement multicultural education which follows the first level will require a significant curriculum adjustment as teachers would be required to teach heroes, holidays, and cultural events outside of the main adopted state academic content standards. Some type of academic activities that take place as a part of the cultural emphasis programs are done as extra curricular activities rather than as part of the academic curriculum. At times when it is done as part of the academic curriculum, it might be the use of worksheets that have little or no connection to the academic standards. It is indeed an additional piece of work which many teachers don't have time and resources to undertake, given the pressures they face these days.

The second level is an improvement over the first, but remains significantly insufficient for today's classroom as many schools are demanding that all learning activities be tied to the academic content standards. When a teacher realizes that, even though the multicultural activity would be relevant and helpful to students but is not clearly tied to the standards, she would be reluctant to have a supervisor walk in on her doing an activity that she cannot readily link to the standards.

The last two approaches suggested by Banks—the transformation approach and the social action approach—do not necessarily require a separate curriculum. According to Banks (2003), in these two approaches “ethnic content is added to the mainstream core curriculum without changing its basic assumptions, nature, and structure” (p.250). It is also at these two levels that we can see the possibility of integrating standards-based instruction and multicultural education. Let's look at these two levels.

The Transformation Approach

The transformative approach requires teachers to change the structure of their curriculum to enable students to engage concepts, issues, events, and themes from a multicultural perspective. Here teachers use the mainstream subject areas like mathematics, the arts, and language and literature to acquaint students with the ways the common United States culture and society has “emerged from a complex synthesis and interaction of the diverse cultural elements that originated within the various cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious groups that make up U.S. society” (Banks, 2003, p. 235). Here students engage and critique issues and concepts which deal with diversity and social justice. They learn to take a stand.

The Social Action Approach

Bank's fourth level, the social action approach, allows a student “to make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them” (p.229). The last two are best implemented by weaving culture appreciation and cultural awareness issues into the existing curriculum: mathematics, language arts, history/social studies, and science. Using this approach, the teachers are able to teach the standards and follow whatever pacing guides are stipulated by their districts, while at the same time teaching equity and social justice without having to look for extra time in their day to teach such multicultural awareness.

It is in the planning of their instruction of the basic subjects that teachers are able to weave in multicultural education. A legitimate question that follows would be “how is this done?” In the section that follows, we will explore how teachers can develop standards-based lessons across various disciplines and effectively weave in multicultural education.

Lesson Planning for the Multicultural Classroom

Lesson planning in a multicultural classroom needs to depart from the exclusively traditional subject matter focus to a broader view of the need of the classroom community. The basic steps for preparing a lesson often vary from one teacher to the other, one teacher education institution to another, yet the basic required elements remain the same.

There are seven steps that would be found in any standard lesson plan, the order may vary, but the content remains the same: (1) goals and objectives, (2) materials and resources, (3) anticipatory set or entry, (4) instructional input, (5) guided practice, (6) independent practice, and (7) assessment/evaluation. Using these steps, we will explore ways to integrate multicultural education into standards-based instructional planning and teaching.

Step 1: Goals and Objectives

For a standards-based lesson plan in the state of California, for example, two basic tools are mandatory for teachers to familiarize themselves with: The goals should usually be derived from the State Academic Content Standards which address the concepts being taught and the State Framework for that subject matter. These are two separate but closely related documents. Oftentimes the two are combined in one volume, but they are nevertheless two separate entities.

The framework provides guidelines and “research-based approaches” for implementing the standards. It is an organized approach to implementing the standards from Kindergarten to twelfth grade. The standards, however, provide the required learning and curriculum content needed for each grade level. The two combine to make for a standards-based curriculum.

For standards-based instruction, the standards remain the first point of call. The California Academic Content Standards provide us with the broad and specific goals to be pursued in every lesson. Assume that a California art teacher wants to teach art critique and analysis to her 7th grade class. Let's plan the lesson. The lesson is anchored on the 7th grade California academic content standard for visual and performing arts, standard 4.0 (Aesthetic valuing), which reads “*Students analyze, assess, and derive meaning from works of art, including their own, according*

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to the elements of art, the principles of design, and aesthetic qualities.”

Let’s narrow our focus down to substandard 4.2, which reads, “*Analyze the form (how a work of art looks) and content (what a work of art communicates) of works of art.*” The standards provide us with the goal of the lesson, which specifies where this lesson is going, yet the teacher is required to isolate certain measurable objectives that would convince her at the end of this lesson that the destination was reached. This refers to the learning objectives. In a multicultural classroom there is need to ensure that our objectives consider cognitive as well as affective domains of learning (Tiedt & Tiedt, 2002, p.41).

The objective is where the teacher articulates her expectations from students in relation to the stated goals, and it is also here that she articulates any multicultural and behavioral objective she wants to achieve through this lesson. In keeping with Banks’ third and fourth levels of multicultural education, the objectives here must not only be measurable, they must have transformational and social action focus.

The task of the teacher is to teach a standards-based lesson, cleverly infusing multicultural education in such a way that students’ worldviews are not only transformed, but they are led to do something to positively impact the world around them. What is social action? Banks (2003) explains that

When you identify concepts and generalizations, you should select those that will help students make decisions and take personal, social, or civic actions that reduce prejudice and discrimination in their personal lives, in the school, and, when possible, in the other social settings in which they function. (p.109)

Social action, therefore, is an action that is taken with the objective of enhancing the social status of another person or group of persons. Whatever thing we do to enhance the social status of another person or group is a social action. A social action objective, therefore, is an objective that aims at enhancing an individual’s or group’s social status.

In the case of this art lesson, this teacher may want to state the following academic objective, “*Students will be able to create a collage of pictures representing the theme of homelessness, and subsequently identify the thoughts and feelings associated with each art work.*” Homelessness is in itself a social as well as multicultural issue, as it addresses a people’s group within

the larger society. The homeless represent marginal life and destitution. However, the objective does not contain any social action. Should the lesson end here, the academic goal would be fully met, but the multicultural impact will be very minimal.

To take it to the higher level, a second objective may need to be added as follows: “*After identifying the thoughts and feelings that those homeless scenes represent, students will list positive actions society can take to engage and mediate those feelings and thoughts, and the problem of homelessness in general.*”

This second objective brings in transformation, as students are led to critically engage the topic in question and propose solutions. However, there is no explicit social action yet. To bring in the social action part of the objective, let’s add that, “*Students will hold an exhibition of their art work on homelessness and the suggested strategies that can be used in addressing it. This may assist people to begin to adjust their attitudes towards the homeless.*” Thus a simple art lesson can produce change of attitude and a changed society. This is social action.

The goals and objectives parts of a lesson may be considered the most crucial part, as time needs to be spent articulating academic and social objectives and merging them into one lesson plan. One of the areas in which teachers may face challenges is articulating a valid social action for primary grade students.

In responding to this challenge, Banks argues, “Primary grade students cannot take actions that will reduce discrimination in the larger society. However, they can make a commitment to not tell or laugh at racist jokes, to play with and make friends with students from other racial, ethnic, religious groups...” (2003, p.108).

Banks seems to be expressing a narrow view of social action in submitting that primary grades “cannot take social actions.” Social action can be undertaken at any grade level. Choosing not to tell or laugh at racist jokes is an action. Primary grade students can and do engage in age appropriate social actions.

According to Taylor and Whittaker (2003), “once the major goal for implementing a change process have been chosen and prioritized, the steps for achieving these goals must be delineated” (p.76). According to them, a plan of action may involve reference to the time and place of the action, like next classroom, assembly ground, community, or neighborhood. This specific detail is not expected to be part of the objectives statement. It is usually best pre-

sented as part of the independent practice. Moving on from goals and objectives, therefore, let’s go to the next level.

Step 2: Materials

The materials that will be needed for this lesson would include poster boards, magazines and newspapers (which will have pictures of the homeless from across all gender and ethnicities), glue sticks, markers, pens and pencils, and paper to write with.

Step 3: Anticipatory Set/Entry

This step is often called “entry” as it excites, arouses interest in, and prepares the students for the learning experience. A relevant story that can accomplish these for this lesson and provoke student curiosity about the homeless or art appreciation can be selected. Kathleen Krull’s *Lives of the Artists: Masterpieces, Messes (and What the Neighbors Thought)* could make a good anticipatory set. The story is read and briefly discussed, and the teacher quickly transitions into the lesson. Another form of anticipatory set may be to preview the lesson by checking to know what the students already know on the topic so as to avoid repeating what they already know.

One good way to do this is to use the KWL chart. This chart asks students for what they already know on the subject (K), what they want to know about the subject (W), and what they have learned (L). The good thing about the KWL chart is that it serves as an anticipatory set while also serving as a way to summarize and assess learning. In this case students can tell what they already know about collages, the homeless, etc. They can state what they want to learn about each of the concepts to be addressed. At the end they will summarize what they learned in terms of art analysis and critique, as well as the homeless.

Step 4: Instructional Input

This is the place where the teacher presents and explains basic concepts, definitions, and clarifications which students need in order to comprehend the lesson. Here is where new concepts are introduced. According to Barba (1998), decisions about your instructional strategies need to depend on the characteristics of your students, information to be learned, and your goals and objectives. This is the right place, as you plan, to specify what scaffolds you intend to use in delivering instruction to special needs students or English learners.

For this lesson, the teacher will need to define and explain such words as collage, homelessness, and aesthetic valuing. Word study (along with pictures) may be additional scaffolds for students who are English learners. The teacher will need to present a variety of collages for illustration. She needs to explain to students how the collages were created by pulling together different shapes and forms that were otherwise unrelated. She could separate the various parts of a collage to demonstrate to students what a collage means and how they are formed.

She now needs to demonstrate the process involved in making collages by starting a collage from the scratch and finishing it as students watch. This is called modeling. After the demonstration, the first part of her direct instruction has ended.

Step 5: Guided Practice

Here, the teacher hands the students a set of arts activity materials containing blank paper and cut out parts from various magazines. Each student would have the same set of items. The teacher will then lead them to make a collage giving them step by step direction. The instructions on the activity can also be typed up and given to individual students.

The teacher walks around, making sure everyone is following her instruction. She ensures that each step is clear and comprehensible to everyone. When everyone has completed that task, she is ready to discuss. She leads them through a discussion of the art principles (form and content) as well as social/multicultural issues represented by the collages they had made. She models for them how to analyze a piece of art and how to decipher their hidden messages. This modeling by the teacher assures that the whole process is clear to the students.

Given the fact that the homeless presents the object of analysis and critique, a discussion of the hidden messages in the art piece would reveal the plight of the homeless and the social questions it should provoke. This way, the discussion of the multicultural objectives of this lesson is not pursued outside of the scope of the lesson's academic goals and objectives—form and content of art.

Step 6: Independent Practice

At this point, the students have fully experienced the process of making collages as well as deciphering the hidden messages through analysis and critique. They have

also discussed the social implications of the feelings aroused by homelessness and how the art pieces portray them. Now they are going to create their own unique collages and use them to communicate unique messages about homelessness.

It will be the task of classmates to decipher the message contained in other classmates' art work as they work in pairs or small groups to analyze their works. Part of the independent practice may be to work individually or in small groups to produce collages that would present positive ways to respond to the feelings and faces of hopelessness in the homeless.

It could also be a written piece that analyzes the feelings and thoughts. The two pieces of work can then be published to the public (which could be school community, school bulletin board, open house day, community center, etc) for viewing. Now social action is completed. The message has been communicated outside the classroom.

Step 7: Assessment and Evaluation

At this point, the teacher may choose to require a written piece of analysis of at least one piece of art from each student. Each assessment may be placed side by side with the artist's own piece of communicative intent, and the success may depend on how closely the critic comes to the artist's communicative intent. The evaluation may also be anchored on the exhibition. Written comments can be solicited from viewers and such comments would indicate whether the artists were successful in presenting the two views of homelessness through their works of art or not.

Extending the Lesson

Extending the lesson beyond visual and performing arts, a language art lesson can be developed for the same 7th grade classroom with good multicultural twist using the following goals and objectives:

Goals and Objectives

Standard: Students will write a summary of a reading material (California 7th grade academic content standard 2.5).

Objective: Students will identify and write the main idea of the story "Bums in the Attic" from the book *The House on Mango Street*, with supporting details.

Social action: Students will go to neighborhood grocery stores and solicit enough supplies to make 101 lunches for the

homeless. The supplies will be donated to a homeless shelter.

Additional Samples of Standards-Based Multicultural Lessons

Lesson 1: Racial Percentage Grade: 5

I. Goals and Objectives:

- a. *Goal:* Standard 1.3. (Data Analysis)—Use fractions and percentages to compare data sets of different sizes.
- b. *Objective:*
 - ◆ Students will search information online regarding American racial distribution.
 - ◆ Students will research the internet for the racial make-up of their city.
 - ◆ Students will discuss the racial make-up of their city and identify ethnicities that are absent or inadequately represented in their city, and explore ways to attract them to the neighborhood to make for more diversity.
 - ◆ The class will write a letter to the mayor of their city presenting their suggestions on how to attract other ethnicities to their community. The list will also be taken to the city library and posted for public reading.

II. Materials:

- ◆ Basic instructional tools (ex. overhead projector, compass, protractor).
- ◆ Computers with online access.
- ◆ Textbook.

III. Anticipatory:

Teacher will read the story "Nino's Pizzeria."

IV. Instructional Input:

Teacher will first teach students how to convert between fraction, decimal, and percentage. Then teacher will do a poll and find out about classroom students' racial distribution and use percentage to present the data collected in a list and in a pie chart.

V. Guided Practice:

Teacher will guide students to take a poll of the entire school's student population and break them down to percentages to show the ethnic distribution.

Then they will search online about the racial distribution of a U.S. city of their choice, find out the percentage of each race in that city and draw a pie chart. (They might start to notice that America is a melting pot, and that sometimes it is not easy to clearly indicate which race one person belongs to).

VI. Independent/Group Activities:

Groups of students will research the internet for the demographics of their city and report to the class on the ethnic make-up of their city in fractions and percentages. The following day, using their research results, students will work in groups to compare the percentage of each racial group in their cities to that of different U.S. cities. They will discuss why certain population of people are missing in their city, and scantily repre-

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sented in another. Issues like equal housing opportunities law, housing segregation, and economic opportunities will be discussed. Each group will devise ways to attract the under-represented group to their city. This list will be sent to the Mayor of their city, taken to the city library, and posted for public reading.

VII. Evaluation/Assessment:

- ♦ The homework will be graded in the next class session to see if students get the math concepts.
- ♦ Students will share their findings on the racial distribution of a U.S. city in a list and in pie chart, in groups of 4. Each student will be graded by teacher and also by their peer on their online project final product.
- ♦ The list of polarizing issues in our city and things that can be done to combat them will merge into one whole class project before it is published. The success of this work will inform the teacher on the success of collaborative activities as well as students' ability to engage sensitive social issues and find solutions to them.

Lesson 2: Language Arts Grade: 9

Goals:

Writing Strategies: 1.0. Students write coherent and focused essays that convey a well-defined perspective and tightly reasoned argument. The writing demonstrates students' awareness of the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process as needed.

Listening and Speaking: 1.1. Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.

Writing: 1.1. Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.

Objectives:

Students will research, discuss, consider, and take a position on current issues faced by Native Americans, in light of historical and contemporary facts. They will lead and participate in small group and class-wide discussions that exhibit cogent thought, that will serve as a theme for a position paper, in the form of a persuasive letter. Further, they will select a public medium or representative to whom they will write and mail a persuasive letter that seeks to effectively stimulate the recipient to consider their position and take the suggested action.

Materials:

- 1 DVD and 2 Videotapes of *Dances With Wolves* and one Videotape of *Incident at Oglalla* (Students will have two scheduled opportunities after school to view *Dances*, as well as option to check out two copies; *Incident* will be viewed in-class.
- 3 x 5 index cards.
- Multi-media equipment, including Internet

access w/overhead projection, is installed and operating.

This lesson plan presumes block schedule, i.e., 90 min. class; may be modified for conventional 50 min. period by increasing number

of days

Also presumed, students had prior introduction to the structure of a persuasive essay (as described in the lessons in the table below).

ClassActivity	Assignment
<p>Day 1 (Warm-Up)</p> <p><i>Entry:</i> Students: In writing journal brainstorm images, words, and phrases you associate with Native Americans.</p> <p><i>Guided Discussion/Instructional Input:</i> Teacher & Students: View <i>Incident at Oglalla</i>. (ref. <i>American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children</i>, Hirschfelder)</p>	<p><i>Teacher Assessment:</i> Someone in your family asks: I saw a bumper sticker that said 'Free Leonard Pelletier,' who is he?</p> <p>Write a one page summary of who he is and why he is in prison.</p>
<p>Day 2 (Instructional Input)</p> <p><i>Debriefing/Discussion:</i> Teacher & Students: On <i>Incident at Oglalla</i>.</p> <p><i>Guided Practice:</i> Students: In groups of 3-4, discuss film and compose consensus opinion in one paragraph on any issues considered.</p> <p><i>Instructional Input Assessment/Debriefing:</i> Teacher & Students: On <i>Dances with Wolves</i>.</p>	<p><i>Independent Practice:</i> Research via the Internet/library a current topic or event directly associated with Native Americans; may include historical perspectives, casinos, reservations, taxes, employment, education, alcoholism, standard of living, etc.</p> <p>Select a topic, keep track (via 3x5 cards) of your references and write one paragraph that summarizes your topic and position.</p>
<p>Day 3 (Guest Speaker)</p> <p><i>Warm Up/Instructional Input/Guided Practice:</i> Teacher & Students: Prepare questions for guest speaker.</p> <p><i>Guest Speaker:</i> Dr. Cornell Shayan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Teaching and Leadership, School of Education at the University of Kansas.</p> <p><i>Discussion:</i> Students: Questions for Dr. Shayan.</p>	<p><i>Journal Entry Prompt:</i> In what way/s will you think differently about Native Americans after today's speaker?</p> <p><i>Social Action:</i> Complete a position paper on the plight of the Native Americans and propose ways the Federal Government can improve their lives. Send your finished position paper, in the form of a letter, to your representative in Congress.</p>

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